1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-S (1907-1908) 1911
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which the food for the community was cooked, but we do not think they would touch it or assist in any way in the cooking. At Omuni a menstruous woman is isolated under a rough shelter where she is waited upon by a younger unmarried sister or cousin who, it was stated, should not herself have attained puberty. During her seclusion she may eat any food cooked at the ordinary fire, but a special platter is kept for her use. The girls who look after her suffer no restrictions. This happens every time a girl or woman menstruates.

Marriage takes place at an early age; it was said that girls sometimes married before puberty, and as we heard of this at Henebedda, Bandaraduwa, and Omuni, we see no reason to doubt the truth of the statement[1]. At Omuni it was pointed out that a certain amount of breast development was necessary before marriage, so that it is probable that connection does not antedate puberty by more than a short time.

With regard to the frequency of such child marriages, we can only say that we never saw any very young girls with babies. Perhaps at the present day prenuptial connection is more common than marriage between the very young, though it is obviously difficult to decide when prenuptial love-making between individuals destined for each other gives place to marriage, among people whose marriages are accompanied with but slight ceremony. It must be remembered that the marriage gift of landed or personal property to a son-in-law, which was formerly customary, is obsolescent at the present day, and this not only makes it more difficult to determine whether marriage has taken place, but probably actually tends to make the exact time of the assumption of the married state less clearly defined.

On account of these considerations we are unable to express any definite opinion as to the frequency of prenuptial connection, the few instances we heard of were between individuals occupying the relationship of *kura* and *naena*, who would in any case marry each other. Thus Kaira of Henebedda and his wife grew up in the same group, and as they had played together as

[1] We are indebted to Mr Frederick Lewis for the information that this is a common practice among Tamils.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-S (1907-1908) 1811
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836 children so they came together as they grew up. The community came to know of what had occurred, the couple were considered married, and now go about together. We were told that no resentment was felt or expressed by the girl's parents or the community, and there was no formal giving over of land or property to Kaira by his father-in-law, because, as was pointed out, the fathers of Kaira and Hudi both belonged to the same group and together moved about over the same land.

We think it may be said that among most Veddas at the present day, especially such as have come in contact with the Sinhalese, there is no violent feeling against premarital connection of the sort here described, but we believe that formerly public opinion was definitely and strongly against the practice, though on this point we do not attempt to dogmatise. There was no doubt as to the attitude of public opinion towards connection between people who were not allotted to each other. This was, and still is, strongly disapproved, and there is no doubt that in the old days the guilty parties risked their lives. 835 It was, however, clear that intrigues of this sort did sometimes 684 occur, and we heard of two instances of what are regarded as incestuous unions which occurred among the Kovil Vanamai Veddas some fifty or sixty years ago. In both cases the girls cohabited with their mothers' sisters' sons, and in both instances the guilty parties were promptly killed by the outraged group. The men were set upon in the jungle, their own fathers it was said taking a prominent part in the assault, while the girls were killed in the huts in which they were living[1].

582 As already mentioned the correct marriage among the Veddas, as among the Sinhalese, is for a man to marry his

[837] [1] The matter has been well stated by Nevill who writing more than twenty years ago says: "The Vaeddas marry young, and are strict monogamists. Consequently the husband and wife are watchfully jealous, each of the other, and love-intrigues are few and far between. Nothing short of murder would content the injured party. This strict morality extends to unmarried girls, who are protected by their guardians with the keenest sense of honour" (*Taprobanian*, Vol. I, p. 178). We do not, however, agree even partially with his statement as to the considerable liberty allowed to widows, we believe that among the wilder Veddas their morality was as strict as that of the maidens and it must be remembered that it was, and is, unusual for any but old women to remain widows for any length of time.